

**RECOMMENDATION
OF THE
SOUTHEAST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD (AREA 4)
December 14, 2010**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Project Number: 3011350

Address: 3701 South Hudson Street

Applicant: Brian Runberg, Runberg Architect Group, PLLC.,
For Harbor Properties, Owner

Board members present: Robert A. Mohn, Chair
Sam Cameron
Tony Case
Brent Conway

Board member recused: Michele Wang

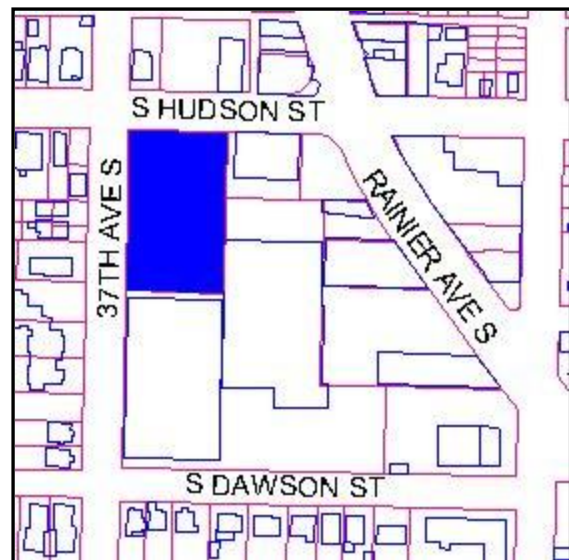
DPD staff present: Michael Dorcy, Land Use Planner

VICINITY INFORMATION

The development site is located at the southeast corner South Hudson to the north and 37th Avenue South to the west and occupies a total land area of approximately 37,600 square feet. The subject lot is zoned Commercial Two with a height limit of 65 feet (C2-65), in the Columbia City neighborhood of South Seattle. Other overlays found at the site are the Columbia City Residential Urban Village and the Southeast Seattle Reinvestment Area Overlay District. Additionally, the east portion of the subject lot falls within the Columbia City Landmark District. The site is not within a designated Environmentally Critical Area (ECA).

The site is fully developed with a one-story building and accessory hard surface parking lot. The site slopes moderately downward from the west property line to the east property line, approximately 6 feet over a distance of 150 feet.

The abutting streets are fully developed rights-of-way with asphalt roadway; curbs, sidewalks and gutters.



AREA DEVELOPMENT

Rainier Avenue South located at the east end of the block is a primary arterial. Rainier Avenue is the life-blood of the commercial corridor for an area that supports a mix of retail, restaurant, office, and industrial uses to name a few. Zoning along Rainier Avenue includes C2, Neighborhood Commercial Two and Three with height limits of 40 and 65 feet (C2-65, NC2-40, & NC3P-40). The commercial zones are characterized by surface parking and buildings well under the area's zoned height limit predominates this area. To the west across 37th Avenue South are a number of residential zones, including Multifamily Lowrise Two (L-2) and Single family 5000 zones that supports a varied assortment of residential structures (apartments, townhomes, and single family). This area is distinctly residential in character with a modest density of residential uses. To the north across South Hudson Street commercial uses dominate the street experience.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant proposes a 5-story apartment dwelling consisting of 124 residential units and underground parking for 99 vehicles in new construction. Existing building will be demolished.

ARCHITECT'S PRESENTATION

Brian Runberg, of Runberg Architecture Group, presented a PowerPoint presentation that identified the project goals of being housing within a transit oriented development and elaborated on the preferred massing scheme and responded to each of the EDG priorities showing colored drawings (site plan, elevations, plans), renderings of the overall 3-d view, and pedestrian-level streetscape renderings. The improved courtyard scheme was detailed and rendered as well as the updated landscape plan for the alley and entrance areas. Samples of the materials proposed on the building exterior were also presented.

BOARD QUESTIONS

The Board had the following questions and clarifying comments, with responses from the applicant:

- Is the courtyard public or private and are there more private zones for the townhome units? Is the main area more for circulation or can residents sit there?
- The catenary lights will define and form the residential common area with furniture for the residents to sit, while a more private area for the townhomes is pulled off the main circulation area. Working urban agriculture planters will be provided within the common residential space.
- Can the public occupy the "stoop" directly west of the courtyard gate?
 - As defined in the renderings, the courtyard gate is pulled back from the property line to allow ample space for the public to sit on the stoop steps and possibly interact with neighbors.
- How wide is the concrete strip sidewalk that leads to the parking garage in the alley?
 - 4'-0" wide

- Where is trash stored and collected?
 - Immediately at the bottom of the drive ramp and tucked under building within garage.
- What encloses the garage?
 - The entire garage is secured with a series of metal mesh gates.
- Does the applicant have any responsibility for street lighting?
 - The public utilities control street lights themselves, but there will be ambient and safety lighting that will affect the lighting conditions of the sidewalk and alley areas.
- Why did the design team choose not to respond to the EDG to open the townhome front doors onto 37th Avenue?
 - Rotating the townhomes to face the street perpendicular versus parallel would severely compromise the openness and negatively affect the courtyard space as well as light and air by closing it off from the townhomes. Other design gestures were implemented to achieve the open engagement to 37th desired by the Board such as providing porches from the townhome units and more windows and Juliet balconies on the main building. Multiple openings of gates and front doors to the street were avoided due to concern of confusion on points of entry and security concerns.
- Clarify need for departure #3 (setbacks)
 - To comply with this code requirement, the design team felt the 4 feet vertical setback and 10 feet horizontal setback from the property line was too disengaging from the street. The design provides a more subtle 2 feet up and between 2-4 feet back along 37th Avenue.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Approximately 4 members of the public attended the DRB meeting. The following comments were offered:

- Liked the landscaping and urban agriculture concepts.
- Encouraged design team to look at possible “vertical” farming examples.
- If the element at the main entry is a water feature, would encourage the design team to look into spending more time and energy on canopies, as water features typically look unmaintained soon after completion.
- Likes courtyard but skeptical about townhomes privacy along 37th.
- The single curb cut for the entire project is great for the pedestrian environment.
- In favor of project, though would suggest reducing total number of parking stalls to accommodate more medium sized.
- The design is doing a lot of things right and approve overall from previous EDG submittal.
- The setback departure is not completely justified as the townhomes will most likely be closed off or blinds drawn to 37th for privacy.

SUMMARY OF BOARD'S RECOMMENDATION – December 14, 2010
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BOARD DELIBERATIONS

- The courtyard has significantly improved into a social space where residents can gather. The entrance along Hudson Street has been softened and refined. The urban agriculture component is a good element in addition to the abundant landscaping, which is significantly more than the required amount.
- The design itself is just about there. It is a large structure in context to the surrounding area but has been well mitigated with good articulation of numerous plan elements and gestures. There are remaining concerns for the 37th Ave condition as it relates to the setback departure.
- The building has a nice beckoning presence from Rainier Ave. The treatment of the alley condition has improved and been refined. It seems there is a geometry problem, making the stoops not work along 37th Ave. Given that reality, the design team has found an appropriate solution.
- The north elevation looks to be mostly metal. Materials were clarified with the provided materials board.

After considering the site and context, hearing public comment, reconsidering the previously identified design priorities, and reviewing the plans and renderings, all Design Review Board members in attendance recommended approval of the subject design and did not recommend conditions for the project.

DESIGN DEPARTURES

All Board members in attendance unanimously approved the following design departures:

DEVELOPMENT STANDARD REQUIREMENT	REQUEST/ PROPOSAL	JUSTIFICATION	ACTION
<p>SMC 23.54.030.G2</p> <p>For two way driveways or easements 22 feet wide or more, a sight triangle on the side of the driveway used as an exit shall be provided, and shall be kept clear of any obstruction for a distance of 10 feet from the intersection of the driveway or easement with a driveway, easement, sidewalk, or curb intersection if there is no sidewalk. The entrance and exit lanes shall be clearly identified.</p>	<p>The use of traffic calming devices or traffic safety mirrors to mitigate the absence of the sight triangle at the S Hudson Street driveway.</p>	<p>The driveway is situated on a legal easement and abuts a historic building, thus making the site triangle unfeasible.</p>	<p>The Board voted unanimously to recommend approval of the requested departure.</p>
<p>SMC 23.54.030.B.1.b</p> <p>When more than five parking spaces are provided, a minimum of 60 percent of the parking spaces shall be striped for medium vehicles. The minimum size for a medium parking space shall also be the maximum size. Forty percent of the parking spaces may be striped for any size, provided that when parking spaces are striped for large vehicles, the minimum required aisle width shall be as shown for medium vehicles.</p>	<p>52% of the parking spaces are striped for medium cars and 48% are striped for compact cars.</p>	<p>The proposed parking mix reflects the urban location of the project site where most of the residents will drive smaller cars than the required mix.</p>	<p>The Board voted unanimously to recommend approval of the requested departure.</p>
<p>SMC 23.47A.008.D.3.</p> <p>The floor of a dwelling unit located along the street-level street-facing facade shall be at least 4 feet above or 4 feet below sidewalk grade or be set back at least 10 feet from the sidewalk.</p>	<p>Units to be located from 0' to 58'-8" off of the property line and 0' to 2'-0" above finished grade @ R.O.W along 37th Ave.</p>	<p>Along 37th Avenue there are 4 units that are less than 10 feet to the property line. These units are 2 feet above the ROW. This condition is a compromise between code requirements and the direction of the DRB with respect to neighborhood compatibility. The DRB expressed concerns that elevating these units 4 feet above 37th Avenue would create a wall along the ROW and result in an unfriendly pedestrian environment.</p> <p>It is our understanding that the intent of SMC 23.47A.008.D.3 is to provide a buffer between residential use and the street level. The project provides a buffer using other elements between the residences and the ROW such as landscaping, screening, and privacy windows.</p>	<p>After consideration of the unique condition of the townhome type units, and given the wide right of way along 37th Avenue S in addition to the screening and landscape provided in the design, the Board voted unanimously to recommend approval of the requested departure.</p>

